



*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
One Ashburton Place, Room 1109
Boston, MA 02108*

DEVAL L. PATRICK
Governor

JOHN W. POLANOWICZ
Secretary

Tel.: 617-573-1600
Fax: 617-573-1890
www.mass.gov/eohhs

**A REPORT ON THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE:
CLIENTS SERVED, BENEFITS OFFERED, PARTNERSHIPS,
AND PROGRAM INTEGRITY ENHANCEMENTS**
September 17, 2013

DTA Financial Overview and Benefits Summary

The Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) serves one in seven residents throughout the Commonwealth, helping them meet their most critical needs, such as feeding their families and supporting basic living expenses. Many of the clients the Department serves are elderly or disabled individuals, children, or pregnant mothers who represent some of the Commonwealth's most vulnerable residents.

The vast majority of the clients DTA serves receive benefits under the federally-funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which provides assistance that can be used to purchase unprepared food items, and cannot be withdrawn as or converted to cash. According to a review of participation in SNAP from August 2013, 49 percent of SNAP clients were identified as nonelderly adult recipients (mostly women); 36 percent were children; and 15 percent were elderly residents.

Of the Commonwealth's households receiving Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) cash benefits, 93 percent were headed by women and 28 percent had disabilities. Of clients receiving Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children (EAEDC) cash benefits, 61 percent were disabled, 36 percent were elderly and more than half were women. More information about SNAP, TAFDC and EAEDC can be found below, in addition to other programs DTA administers.

Eligibility

Eligibility for transitional assistance differs based on the program. Recipients of transitional assistance programs must meet low-income guidelines, and be United States citizens or legal non-citizens. Benefit eligibility determinations can include factors such as household size, work status and countable income and assets. To be eligible for assistance, all clients must have a Social Security Number or verify that they have applied for an SSN, per DTA regulations. DTA verifies an applicant's SSN through a daily match with the Social Security Administration. DTA verifies an applicant's citizenship status through documentation such as a passport, birth certificate, naturalization papers, etc. Qualified non-citizen status is verified through the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements system, which is run by the Department of Homeland Security. If verification is not received, applicants are deemed ineligible for benefits.

The average monthly SNAP benefit, per household, per month is \$234. The average monthly cash benefit, per family, per month is \$453. The amount of monthly assistance that a household receives can vary based on household size, work exemption status, countable income and certain expenses. DTA's regulatory eligibility requirements also limit TAFDC cash client countable assets to under \$2,500.

Benefits Summary

SNAP benefits are administered by DTA and funded by the federal government, which also provides partial reimbursement for the state's operational costs.

- FY13 federal SNAP benefits administered by DTA – nearly \$1.4 billion

DTA also receives funding through the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant to support a variety of programs and services to support low-income families as they transition into the workplace. Recipients must demonstrate active participation in a job or in an educational program designed to improve occupational skills, unless exempt by state or federal law.

- 2013 federal TANF funding administered by Massachusetts – \$459.4 million

While the majority of benefits DTA administers are federally-funded, in FY13, DTA received \$786 million from the state budget for its operations and programs, including \$641 million in state-funded benefits to low-income Massachusetts residents. Those benefits were funded by the following line items:

- 4403-2000, TAFDC Grant Payments – \$315.3 million
- 4405-2000, State Supplement to SSI – \$237.2 million
- 4408-1000, EAEDC – \$87.2 million
- 4403-2007, State Supplemental Nutrition Program – \$1.2 million

DTA Program Integrity Summary

Preventing Fraud, Waste and Abuse

The Department takes any instances of fraud, waste or abuse seriously. DTA's program integrity unit works with members of law enforcement and other state and federal agencies to monitor and address any reports of abuse, whether identified through its public tipline, or through audits and internal controls. While the vast majority of clients use their benefits as intended, and instances of misuse represent a very small portion of the total benefits administered, DTA has a zero tolerance policy for fraud, waste or abuse.

Program Integrity Partnerships

The Administration has a strong partnership with the state auditor in protecting the integrity of public assistance programs. Through the partnership, DTA and MassHealth identify cases of potential public benefits fraud and refer them up to the auditor's Bureau of Special Investigation for further collaborative action.

Results from the program integrity partnership show that more than 99 percent of benefits are being used as intended to meet basic needs. MassHealth and DTA have both launched aggressive, new program integrity initiatives to stop fraud on the front end and protect benefits for those who truly need them.

100-Day Plan Updates and 18-Month Outlook

In March, 2013, Secretary of Health and Human Services John Polanowicz and DTA Commissioner Stacey Monahan launched a 100-day action plan to enhance program integrity, improve client services and restore public trust in the agency. The 100-day plan was completed on time and within the Department's current appropriation. DTA is also working on longer term initiatives, including a business process redesign to improve efficiencies and partnering with the Legislature on additional reforms to help clients transition.

DTA 100 Day Action Plan Success

EBT-RELATED PROGRAM INTEGRITY ENHANCEMENTS		
Enhancements	Initiative Descriptions	Status
State Law Enforcement Bureau (SLEB) Agreement	The agreement allows DTA and local law enforcement to investigate SNAP trafficking, enhance program integrity, and protect benefits for those who truly need them. DTA has signed six sub-agreements with cities and towns in the Commonwealth.	Signed
ATM/POS Blocking	Working with its vendor, Xerox, DTA is blocking ATM and Point of Sale use at restricted locations, tightening controls on cash assistance and fulfilling legislative mandates.	Implemented/ongoing
Implement \$5 fee for replacement EBT cards	DTA implemented a \$5 fee for replacement EBT cards for both SNAP and cash assistance clients. Since December, 2012, DTA has collected more than \$234,000 in replacement card fees while reducing replacement card requests by more than 60%.	Implemented
NEW FRONT END DETECTION & ENHANCED DATA MATCHING		
Dept. of Revenue Match	This new match makes employment information for all household members available at the time of eligibility determination, and expands data received by DTA to include self-employment income, rental income, and alimony.	Pilot implemented
Registry of Motor Vehicles Match	Allows DTA to verify all vehicles owned by the applicant to eliminate reliance on client self-disclosures. DTA also crosschecks license photos for identification purposes.	Implemented
Department of Correction Match	Weekly match with Mass Dept. of Correction supplements DTA's existing federal quarterly match and minimizes lag time between incarceration and closure of benefits.	Implemented
ADDITIONAL PROGRAM INTEGRITY ENHANCEMENTS		
Building Program Integrity Unit Capability	DTA's program integrity unit is increasing its staff, adding 10 new investigators to carry out the additional matches and enhancements in the 100-day plan.	In process
Residency and Address Verification	DTA revised landlord verification and shared housing forms to require clients to sign "under penalty of perjury." The Department also increased address verification controls.	Implemented
Social Security Number Verification Enhancements	DTA enhanced verification of names, date of birth and gender of clients who have a system generated number, through the SSA and EVS verification process for updated SSNs.	Implemented

Income Verification	DTA implemented front-end income verification through Equifax's national database in every office to significantly increase timeliness of employment information available, while reducing reliance on "pay and chase" process.	Implemented
Bridge to Stability Listening Tour	DTA held 29 listening sessions across the state with over 500 public attendees, 30 members of the Legislature and valuable public comments submitted.	Complete

DTA 18-Month Outlook

Business Process Redesign	As part of its ongoing business process redesign, DTA is making organizational improvements and implementing an Integrated Eligibility System to improve compliance and customer service (reducing wait times and improving response to phone calls). DTA is also modernizing business practices by integrating Electronic Document Management.	In progress
Implement Photo Identification Law	Implementation of legislation requiring photo ID on client EBT cards is underway and scheduled for completion well in advance of the required timeframe.	In progress
Welfare Reform Legislation	DTA is working with its partners in the Legislature to support reforms that help increase client self-sufficiency, tighten rules and sanctions, and invest in program integrity.	Pending legislation

MassHealth Program Integrity Enhancements

In September, 2013, the Commonwealth's MassHealth program announced the launch of an innovative new program to detect and prevent provider fraud, waste and abuse in real-time by freezing payments to providers with suspicious claims until they are investigated. The system will generate significant cost savings for the Commonwealth and federal government by preventing improper billing, waste, and abuse before it happens. The predictive modeling system builds on the already strong program integrity measures built into the state's Medicaid claims system to detect anomalies and trends typically identified through post-payment analysis.

Through changes to Health Information Exchange Integrated Eligibility System as part of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), MassHealth will have more tools to access to real-time state, federal and private databases to enhance data verification checks. MassHealth is also working through the ACA to expand health care access, improve quality, and reduce costs.

Conclusion

The Patrick Administration is committed to implementing strategies aimed at strengthening our critical safety net programs and helping people help themselves. This includes enhancing program integrity, improving client services, and ensuring that taxpayer resources are used appropriately and as intended, to help the Commonwealth's most vulnerable residents meet their basic needs. The Administration looks forward to continuing its work with partners at the state and federal level to accomplish these goals.

###